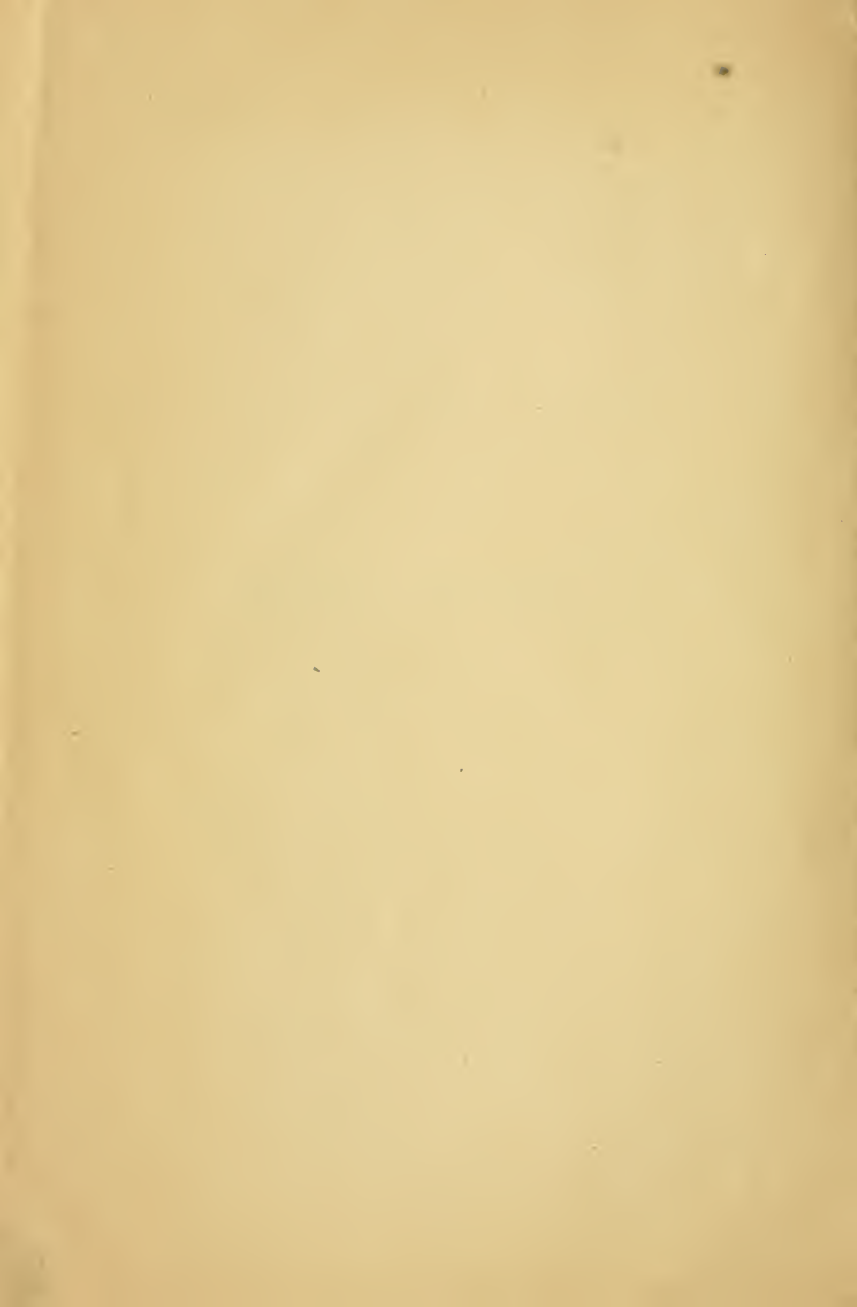


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13, SIMON STREET



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A PLAY IN ONE ACT

By

ANTHONY P. WHARTON

Alister The Alister
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seud.

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13, SIMON STREET

Produced at the Vaudeville Theatre, London, on
Thursday, May 1, 1913, with the following cast:—

WILLIAM LASSEN . . . *Mr. George Desmond.*
JOHN RUTT *Mr. Douglas Munro.*
CECIL HENRY CARTER . *Mr. Ronald Squires.*
MISS RAEBURN. . . . *Miss Hilda Trevelyan.*

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13, SIMON STREET

The scene represents a back room on the second floor of a tenement house in Simon Street, Whitechapel ; a dingy, squalid apartment, without carpet, furnished in the most meagre and primitive way—a deal table, a disreputable bedstead, a wash-hand stand with a dilapidated jug and basin, a chair, a stool, a packing-case (which does duty as larder and as seat), a small cracked mirror suspended from a nail ; some odd culinary utensils. About the room are seedy fragments of masculine attire : before the fire hangs a pair of trousers, bedraggled and steaming ; towards the front of the room are a formidable pair of boots, caked with dry mud.

At the back is a small window.

At the left is a door leading to the staircase. At the right is a door leading to a smaller adjoining room.

The room is illuminated by firelight and the light of two candles, inserted in the necks of beer-bottles. There is darkness outside.

The time is about five o'clock on the afternoon of a day in the February of the present year.

At the table WILLIAM LASSEN is dining. He is a small monkey-like man of about forty, unshaven, unclean and generally unprepossessing. His clothes are grimy and greasy ; his neck is encircled by a dirty handkerchief. The muddy boots are evidently his property : his feet are for the moment encased in thick,

coarse stockings. At his elbow is a mutilated loaf : in one of his hands is a large chunk of bread ; in the other a clasp-knife. As he consumes each mouthful he spreads another portion of the chunk with cheese. He eats noisily and voraciously, but with distracted eyes : sometimes he glances at a newspaper which has fallen to the ground at his feet, sometimes at the steaming trousers, sometimes at the muddy boots. As he looks at the boots an idea strikes him. His jaws pause in their labour, he places the unfinished chunk and the knife on the table, rises and goes over to the door leading to the smaller room, and is about to knock at it : he checks himself, however, and, crossing to the door leading to the staircase, satisfies himself that it is locked (from the inside). He then returns towards the other door, turns aside to pick up the fallen newspaper, which he first drops into the packing-case, then secretes, on manifest second thoughts, in his pocket ; finally knocks at the door leading to the other room, at first gently, then as he receives no response, a second time, more loudly.

CARTER (from the adjoining room, sleepily). Yes ? What is it ? Half a moment !

After a moment the door opens and CARTER appears ; a good-looking, tall, slight, still somewhat boyish young man of about thirty, gently-bred, and with considerable charm of manner and appearance, despite the obvious fact that his linen is several days old.)

CARTER. Yes ?

LASSEN. Ow. 'Ope I ain't disturbed you. Was you writin' ?

CARTER (whose manner, despite an attempt to appear at ease, is suggestive of considerable anxiety ; he is a little muddled, a little indistinct of speech—just sufficiently so to reveal the fact that he has been

drinking rather more than is good for him). Yes. I was—ah—writing. Can I do anything for you?

LASSEN (*who has been scrutinizing him closely*). Ow. I thought you was asleep. I 'ad to knock a second time. (*He pauses. As CARTER makes no reply.*) It's like this. I just thought as 'ow you might like your boots cleaned. I was just goin' to do me own, so I says to meself, p'raps 'e'd like 'is done too.

CARTER (*hesitatingly*). Oh, thanks—well—I—really, I scarcely like to impose upon your good-nature.

LASSEN (*before CARTER has finished*). Ow, it's no trouble. Wown't take me a minute. 'Ave you got any slippers to put on while I'm doin' the boots?

CARTER. Well, no, I haven't.

LASSEN. Never mind. Just you slip 'em off. I shan't be 'arf a mo'.

CARTER. Well—thank you very much. It's very good of you.

LASSEN (*with a derisive grin, at CARTER's back*). Not at all. (*As CARTER seats himself and begins to unlace his smart but somewhat besmirched footgear.*) S'pose you ain't never wore a pair o' boots as dirty as that afore, did you?

CARTER (*smiling slightly*). Except at footer.

LASSEN (*interested*). Ow! you plays football, does you?

CARTER (*evasive*). Yes.

LASSEN. Where?

CARTER (*evasive*). Where? Oh, several places.

LASSEN. Ow. An' you write books, you say. (*A pause.*) Books about the East End and the lower clawsses, you write?

CARTER (*evasive*). That's it. (*In a business-like tone.*) I say! How do the posts go in this neighbourhood?

LASSEN (*attentive*). Powsts? (*After a pause, stolidly.*) Cawn't say. Same's other plaices, I s'pose. W'y?

CARTER (*endeavouring not to betray over-anxiety*). Well—I expect a letter—and it may possibly come by this afternoon's post—if that hasn't gone already. You don't know, you say?

LASSEN. Now. I never writes letters an' I never gets 'em. (*A pause.*) Now I comes to think of it, I don't believe as 'ow I ever 'ave see a powstman in Simon Street. (*A pause.*) Now. Don't believe as 'ow I 'ave.

CARTER (*forcibly playful*). No such things as bills around here?

LASSEN. Bills? Now. There ain't no credit in Simon Street (*A pause.*) W'y? I thought as 'ow you told me as 'ow you'd come 'ere to get away from—from things o' that kind?

CARTER (*rather sharply*). Things of what kind?

LASSEN. Letters—an' things like that. Thought you wanted to be quite to yourself—so's you could do your book-writin'.

CARTER (*standing up*). Oh, yes, yes—but you see, I expect this one letter—and—well—I want you to look out for it for me. It will be addressed to J. Wynne—(*spelling.*) W-Y-N-N-E—Wynne. Do you think you'll remember that?

LASSEN. Ow yes. I'll remember that all right. Address of J. Wynne. I'll remember.

CARTER. Perhaps you'd be good enough to make some inquiries about the ²posts, would you? By the way—this is a tenement house, you told me. I'd forgotten that. To whom would a postman deliver letters addressed to this house?

LASSEN (*stolidly*). Down't know, I'm sure. I never was a powstman.

CARTER (*visibly struck by the man's manner: after a dubious glance at his inscrutable face*). Well—(*hesitating.*)—look here! (*He takes a half-sovereign from his pocket and holds it out to LASSEN.*) If a letter is delivered at this house addressed to J. Wynne—you see that it's brought to me.

LASSEN (*making no motion to accept the coin, looking at CARTER attentively, faintly insolently*). W'y cawn't you gow an' see abaht it yourself?

CARTER. I'm offering you half-a-sovereign to do the job for me.

LASSEN. Ow. Are you? Well, wot I says is this. If that letter's worth 'arf a quid to you—an' you're—say you're too busy writin' books abaht the lower clawsses to look after it yourself—well——

CARTER (*impatently*). Well—what then?

LASSEN. Well, w'y, then it's worth a 'ole quid, I say.

CARTER. Oh, I see! (*He substitutes a sovereign for the half-sovereign.*) There. See about it.

LASSEN (*grinning as he pockets the coin*). I'll see abaht it.

CARTER (*going towards the door leading to the other room*). Thank you.

LASSEN (*distorting his face in a grimace of derisive contempt behind CARTER'S back*). Down't mention it.

CARTER (*turning towards LASSEN again, putting his hand into his trousers pocket*). Oh! there's another thing I want you to do for me. Do you think you could buy me some collars?

LASSEN. Collars?

CARTER (*handing him some more money*). Yes. Half a dozen. This kind. (*Indicating his own.*) Sixteen by two-and-a-quarter.

(*There is a knock at the door leading from the stairs.*)

CARTER *starts and instinctively retreats towards the smaller room.*)

CARTER. Who's that?

LASSEN (*who has noted his nervousness attentively*). Wot you so scared abaht (*Slowly turning his head towards the door, shouting.*) 'Oo's that?

RUTT (*outside*). Me. Jack.

LASSEN. Ow. Arf a mo'. (*To CARTER.*) It's

ownly a friend o' mine. You needn't be afraid.

CARTER (*nervously snappish*). Afraid

LASSEN. That's wot I said—afraid. (*A pause. Significantly, as CARTER gazes at him uncertainly*). 'E's my friend. You can trust 'im same's you can trust me. O' course, if you'd rather not 'ave any one know as 'ow you're 'ere—— (*He pauses, then, rising, approaches CARTER with a menacing leer on his face.*)

CARTER (*hastily*). Well, yes—I'd rather they didn't. Don't forget about the letter—and the collars——

LASSEN (*grinning*). Now.

RUTT (*outside*). W'y the 'ell down't you open the door?

LASSEN (*shouting*). All right.

(*He nods to CARTER, who disappears hurriedly into the adjoining room, locking the door behind him.*

LASSEN watches his exit with an unpleasant grin, then crosses the room, unlocks the other door and admits JOHN RUTT. RUTT is a powerfully-built and sinister-looking ruffian of about thirty, dressed like a navvy, decorated with a recently-acquired black eye, and for the moment plainly in evil humour.)

RUTT. Wot the bloomin' 'ell's up? W'y couldn't you owpen the bloomin' door wen you 'eard me knockin'?

LASSEN. Ow, shut your row. W'y didn't you come long agow, that's wot I want to know. 'Ere I've been waitin' for the lawst three hours for you. 'Oo give you that eye?

RUTT (*surlily, but plainly somewhat afraid of the smaller but stronger spirit*). Never you mind. Wot d'you want?

LASSEN. Not you, if you cawn't keep a civil tongue in your 'ed. D'y' 'ear?

RUTT (*sullenly*). I 'ear.

LASSEN. Well, then—'eed. (*He leaves the door, which he had closed, but, in his irritation, has forgotten to lock, and comes towards the table, followed slowly by RUTT. Turning to look at Rutt menacingly once more.*) If you down't—one o' these fine days I'll lose my temper an' get talkin' abaht you—and p'raps sayin' too much, see? You mind wot I'm tellin' you. (*Angrily seating himself at the table, and indicating the stool to RUTT, who has been about to seat himself on the packing case.*) 'Ere. Sit there, I down't want o' ave to shout at you. First of all, did you gow to the 'Orse an' 'Ounds?

RUTT (*surlily*). Yes.

LASSEN. Well?

RUTT. I awsked 'em same's you said in your message, if you'd been in there lawst night. They said you 'ad. I said, 'Oo with? They said, by yourself. I awsked wot time did you go away. They didn't know. Said they didn't nowtice you gowin' out.

LASSEN. 'Oo'd y' awsk?

RUTT. The boss an' the potboy an' the gal—all of em.

LASSEN (*pleased*). That's all right. (*He glances towards the door of the adjoining room, rises, approaches it softly, listens for a moment, then returns to the table.*) Yes. I was in the 'Orse an' 'Ounds lawst night. W'ere were you? Collectin' black eyes, I suppose. (*Lowering his tone*). Now, look 'ere. There was a chap there lawst night as every one must 'ave nowticed. A toff. Any of 'em say anything abaht 'im?

RUTT. Yes, I 'eard abaht 'im from the gal. Young chap in light clothes with a small handbag—spoke to nowone ownly the gal.

LASSEN. That's 'im.

RUTT (*staring*). W'y. Wot abaht 'im? Did you—?

LASSEN (*with a ferocious grin*). Not yet. Now. But I 'appened to be waitin' outside the 'Orse an' 'Ounds w'en 'e came out, an' I passed 'im the time o'

night—an'—well—we 'ad a mowst interestin' conversation. See? 'E towld me as 'ow 'e was writin' a book abaht the East End, an' wanted to find a room in some nice, quiet, respectable 'ouse abaht 'ere, w'ere 'e could stay an' write it—with a nice view o' the lower clawsses out o' the window. See?

RUTT. Gow on. (*Interested.*)

LASSEN. Well, of course, I knew the very room 'e wanted—quiet, respectable, chawming view. (*He jerks his head towards the door of the adjoining room.*) There it ~~was~~, waitin' for 'im. An' there 'e is, at this moment—writin' books as 'appy an as quiet as can be. I down't think.

RUTT (*after a pause, during which they stare at one another fixedly*). Any stuff on 'im?

LASSEN. That's just it, ole bloke. I know as 'ow 'e's got some on 'im. (*A pause*). If 'e's the man I takes 'im for, 'e's got owver twelve 'undred on 'im—stiff.

RUTT (*staggered*). Twelve—twelve. (*In a whisper that is almost a squeal*)—underd? On 'im?

LASSEN (*taking the newspaper from his pocket*). 'Ere. Look at this. (*He holds the paper in his hand for some moments, without unfolding it.*) You see, I got thinkin' abaht 'im. I nownticed as 'ow the chap was nervous an' excited like—lookin' abaht 'im—very particular abaht the other people in the 'ouse—wot kind were they—did they come into my room—an' all that. So, lawst night, after 'e'd gone in there (*nodding towards the other room*) I got thinkin' abaht the thing, an' I made up my mind that it might be worth while 'avin' a look at the pipers for th lawst few days. See?

RUTT. Well?

LASSEN. Well—I did. Soon's as I could get any-one to go an' buy 'em for me. This is wot I finds. 'Ere, 'ave a look at this. (*Opening the newspaper.*) See that photograph?

RUTT. Yes.

LASSEN. This is wot is wrote underneath. (*Reading.*) "Cecil 'Enery Carter, Messrs. E. and G. Wright's cashier, 'oo 'as been missing since Friday lawst. A sum of over twelve 'underd pounds, representin' the week's wages of the firm's employés is unaccounted for." (*A pause.*) An' the reason w'y it's unaccounted for is 'cause it's in a 'andbag in the two-pair back o' Thirteen Simon Street, White-chapel, along o' Mister 'Enery Cecil Carter. (*Significantly.*) Wot now one, as I believes, knows except 'im (*with a jerk towards the other room*)—an' me—an' you—an' p'raps one other person.

RUTT (*who has eyed him attentively, now nodding from the photograph to the door*). It's like 'im?

LASSEN. It is 'im.

RUTT (*after a pause*). Waiges, it says. That'd be cash?

LASSEN. Yes, 'underd to one.

RUTT (*after another pause*). 'Oo's the other person?

LASSEN. That's just it. I down't know abaht 'er. Lawst night arter 'e came 'ere, 'e wrowte a letter as 'e give me to powst. Miss Raeburn was the naim on it.

RUTT. Miss wot?

LASSEN. Miss Raeburn. I didn't nowtice the rest, because I 'adn't got thinkin' abaht things then.

RUTT. You powsted it, then, did you?

LASSEN. Yes, like a juggins. You see, 'e kidded me right at first with his yarn abaht 'im writin' books. Writin' books! 'E's been fuddlin' 'isself with w'iskey all day, that's the book 'e's writin'. I see 'im buyin' it in the 'Orse an' 'Ourds lawst night, an' stickin' it in the 'an'bag..

RUTT. Tryin' to keep up 'is courage, is 'e? (*Grinning.*)

LASSEN. Yes. That's the sort 'e is. No use. Soft. 'E wown't be much trouble. (*A pause. Lowering his voice again.*) 'E's expectin' a letter this arternoon—under the naim o' Wynne. Sow 'e tould me just now.

RUTT. That'll be an awnser to the one wot you powsted for 'im lawst night, eh?

LASSEN. I'll take the liberty o' openin' it, any'ow, to see. We've got to be certain abaht that letter, Jack. 'Ooever is to write it knows as (*with a nod towards the other room*) 'e's 'ere. You see?

RUTT. That's right. Trust you for a 'ed, Bill.

LASSEN (*grinning*). I down't think. I've got 'is boots. More 'ed.

RUTT. Took 'em—or awsked for 'em?

LASSEN (*with a wink*). Suggested as 'ow I might clean 'em for 'im. 'E 'as nothing else for 'is poor feet, neither. (*Putting down the boots, which he had taken up for a moment as he spoke; again significantly.*) Now, first thing we've got to get 'old o' this letter wot 'e's expectin'. We cawn't do anythin' until we've got that—not safely. If it's from this Miss Raeburn, w'y—

(*There is a knock at the door leading from the stairs. Both men turn their heads.*)

LASSEN. P'raps that's the postman. Gow an' unlock the door.

(*There is another knock.*)

LASSEN (*shouting*). All right. Down't be in such a 'urry.

(*As RUTT rises, the door opens and before either of the astonished men can move, MISS RAEBURN has entered the room. She advances a few steps, then stops, a charming apparition, arrayed in handsome furs, young, healthy, and serene of manner, but unmistakably resolute and strong-willed; without the least affectation of dignity, formidably dignified; the gracious woman that retaineth honour.*)

LASSEN. Wot the—

(*Both men rise abruptly. LASSEN advances a few steps towards MISS RAEBURN.*)

MISS RAEburn (*glancing about her, then, with a winning smile at the two men*). Please forgive me for disturbing you—but perhaps you may be able to assist me. I am looking for a gentleman who is staying here, in this house. A Mr. Wynne. Do you happen to know which is his room?

LASSEN. Wot naime did you say, miss?

MISS RAEburn. Mr. Wynne.

LASSEN (*meditatively*). Mister Wynne? Now.

MISS RAEburn (*turning to RUTT*). Perhaps you may know

RUTT. Now.

LASSEN. Down't believe as 'ow I ever 'eard the naime o' Wynne afore.

MISS RAEburn. Mr. Wynne is young and tall and fair. That may help. Rather good-looking.

LASSEN. Young and good-lookin'. Now. There's now one young an' good-lookin' in this 'ouse.

MISS RAEburn (*who has been watching his face closely, as if suspecting reticence. Calmly, almost thoughtfully*). Except you—and—this other gentleman.

LASSEN (*grinning*). Yes, that's it.

MISS RAEburn. Who lives in the rooms above these?

LASSEN. Now one. Two families wot did live there wos took to the 'orsepital lawst week Diphtheria they 'ad. There's now one livin' there now. 'Cept microwbes.

MISS RAEburn (*whose eyes have fastened themselves on CARTER'S boots, absently*). Indeed? (*Advancing towards the boots.*) How funny! Those are just the kind of boots the gentleman I am looking for always wears.

(*She glances quickly from LASSEN'S stockinged feet to RUTT'S hobnails, then to CARTER'S boots again, then to LASSEN'S mud-caked pair which stand near the packing-case; finally to LASSEN'S inscrutable face.*)

MISS RAEBURN. How funny!

(LASSEN glances across at RUTT, who has at once risen again and intercepted MISS RAEBURN'S retreat to the stairs. LASSEN diverts him with a gesture, and he returns slowly to the table.)

MISS RAEBURN (*after a pause*). You're quite sure you can't tell me where I shall find Mr. Wynne?

LASSEN (*obviously making up his mind, approaching her*). Might I take the liberty o' inquirin' your naime, Miss?

MISS RAEBURN. I am Miss Raeburn.

LASSEN (*exchanging a look with RUTT*). Ow. Miss Raeburn. (*A pause.*) An' this Mr. Wynne is a great friend o' yours, I dessay?

MISS RAEBURN. Oh, yes. I'm quite sure he would be glad to see me.

LASSEN. 'Course 'e would; yes. Well, now, 'ere. I cawn't say as 'ow I mightn't be able to find 'im, or I cawn't say as 'ow I might. But, seein' as 'ow you're sow anxious-like—I'll try wot I can do. 'Ow's that?

MISS RAEBURN. I shall be very grateful to you indeed.

LASSEN. Ow, don't talk abaht it. Look 'ere, miss—you just wite 'arf a mo' aht there on that landin'—w'ile I 'ave a word with my mite 'ere, will you?

MISS RAEBURN. Of course. Certainly. (*She goes towards the door.*)

LASSEN (*accompanying her*). Just 'arf a mo'. You may leave the door owpen. (*To RUTT.*) Put them boots against it, Jack, will you?

RUTT. Which? These? (*Picking up LASSEN'S boots, he uses them to prop the door leading to the stairs open.*)

LASSEN. That's it. (*To MISS RAEBURN, confidentially.*) If you 'ears any one comin' up them stairs, miss—you just nip in 'ere—see—quick.

(*Still more confidentially.*) We down't want to 'ave 'quisitive fowlk awskin' wot brings a laidy like you to a 'owse like this, does we?

MISS RAEBURN. I don't see that it matters—However, I shall do as you ask.

(*She goes out on to the landing, where she is invisible to the audience, but visible to any one in the further portion of the room. LASSEN comes forward so that he is invisible to any one standing on the landing, and intimates by a gesture that RUTT is to follow him. RUTT, after a dubious glance at the landing, does so.*)

RUTT (*in an angry undertone*). Wot's the gaime? Wot d'you let 'er aht o' the room for?

LASSEN. You shut your ugly faice. I'm lookin' arter this.

RUTT (*angrily*). Ow, are you! An' I'm to do wot you orders, am I? I down't think. Now, look 'ere—straight—this is 'arves or it's nothink, d'y' 'ear? No more bloomin' monkey tricks. 'Arves it is—or I go aht.

LASSEN (*angrily*). Well, gow aht, you bleedin' idiot.

RUTT. All right. But if I goes aht, I knows w'ere the stright tip 'll find Inspector Yates. See? I mean it. You 'ad me for a mug lawst time. Not now more, though—not now more, Bill.

LASSEN. Ow, for Gawd's sake, quit! You maike me tired. Wot do you think as I'd 'ave to talk to Inspector Yates abaht, eh? Wot fabaht the Jew-man? Wot abaht Bessie Pollitt's fancy man? Wot abaht the chap as wos fahnd under the Canal bridge on New Year's Eve? Ow, chuck it!

RUTT. I down't care. I've told you. (*Fiercely.*) I'll swing for you, you little twister—that 'll be the end of it. Yes or no? W'ich is it to be?

LASSEN (*angrily, but giving way, plainly impressed by the ferocity of the other*). Shut it, will you! (*He*

strolls back and, after a casual glance out to the landing comes back.) Yes. 'Course it's 'arves.

RUTT. All right, then—but remember! (*Going close to him.*) An' wot's more, you must do your own share of it, Bill—Now shirkin' an' leavin' it to me, to threaten me with it arterwards. See?

LASSEN. Ow, never you fear. I'll do my share. Now, 'ere (*with a nod towards the landing*) is she 'is missus? Wot do you think?

RUTT. Either 'is missus, or gowin' to be, I'd say. W'y?

LASSEN. That's wot I thinks too. If sow, she's pretty saife not to 'ave got gabbin' abaht w'ere she wos gowin' to this arternoon, you see. But we've got to be certain. She might 'ave some one waitin' for 'er somew'ere abaht. We've got to 'ave a look rahnd, see? We'll get 'er back into the room, 'ave a look rahnd, an' if it's all saife—w'y, the sooner it's done—

RUTT (*looking towards the smaller room*). Wot's 'e like? Big?

LASSEN. Ow, big enough. No 'eart. We shawn't 'ave any trouble with 'im, I tells you.

RUTT (*looking towards the landing*). She'll fight.

LASSEN. I'll look arter 'er. It's got to be quick, see. Soon's she comes back into the room, you get to the door. Quiet, you know. Now fuss till we makes certain. Then I'll interdooce Mr. Wynne—and we'll leave 'em to bill and coo for a few minutes w'ile we taik a stroll rahnd. You gow up towards the canal. I'll gow dahn Heller's Street and The Lane.

RUTT (*dubious*). 'Ardly saife, is it?

LASSEN. Wot? Leavin' 'em 'ere? W'y not? The door will be locked. They may scream their 'earts aht afore any one 'll 'eed 'em in this 'ouse. An' I'll 'ave 'is boots. 'Sides, 'e doesn't want to gow aht. 'E's quite 'appy w'ere 'e is.

RUTT (*unconvinced*). I down't think it's saife, Bill.

LASSEN. Yes, it is.

RUTT. Wot abaht the winders ?

LASSEN. Well, 'cept 'e *wants* 'is neck browke— or 'as a aeroplane in 'is 'an' bag—— Ow, it's saife as 'ouses. We're waistin' time. You'll want to look abaht careful, mind. Any one as caime with 'er 'd wite in a shop or under a archway or some plaice like that. Down't be too long—but look careful. I'll wite on the stairs if I'm back first. You clear aht o' the room soon's I gives you the tip. Get owver near the door now.

RUTT. It's not saife leavin' 'em, Bill. That's wot I says.

(Unwillingly he moves a little towards the door. LASSEN picks up Carter's boots and places them, with his own, also near the door. He then goes towards the door.)

LASSEN *(loudly)*. All right, miss. Come in.

(MISS RAEURN re-enters the room, looking steadily at LASSEN's face from the moment of her entrance.)

LASSEN *(casually)*. Just shut that door, Jack.

(RUTT shuts and locks the door, then looks inquiringly at LASSEN, who nods slightly. RUTT places himself against the door and, producing a pipe, proceeds to fill it by the aid of a clasp-knife and a lump of plug.)

LASSEN *(to MISS RAEURN)*. We got to be careful, you see, miss. Now, it's like this. You says you're Miss Raeburn, does you ?

MISS RAEURN. Yes.

LASSEN. You down't 'appen to be Mrs. Wynne, does you ?

MISS RAEURN *(smiling, but keeping her eyes always on his face)*. No.

LASSEN. Ow. *(Wheeling on her suddenly.)* Not Mrs. 'Enry Cecil Carter, by any chance, is you ?

MISS RAEURN *(controlling herself)*. No. *(Smiling.)*

Not Mrs. anything, I am ashamed to say. Just plain Miss Raeburn.

LASSEN (*who has watched her keenly, after a pause*).
Ow. (*To RUTT, significantly.*) I say, Jack, down't smoke that pipe 'ere w'ere the laidy is.

MISS RAEBURN. Oh, I don't mind in the least, I assure you.

LASSEN. Ow, a little fresh air 'll do 'im no 'arm.

MISS RAEBURN (*with candour*). Well, no—I don't suppose it will.

(LASSEN *nods to RUTT, and crosses to the door. RUTT goes out. LASSEN relocks the door, slips the key into his pocket and approaches MISS RAEBURN slowly.*)

LASSEN. If you wants to know w'ere your friend Mr. Carter is—'e's in there. In that room. (*Indicating the adjoining room with a jerk of his head, watching her face closely.*)

MISS RAEBURN. Mr. Carter? (*Smiling.*) But I'm not looking for Mr. Carter. I'm looking for a Mr. Wynne.

(LASSEN *stares at her for a moment in silence, with a grin not devoid of admiration, then turns abruptly, and crossing to the door of the adjoining room, knocks. This time also he is obliged to repeat the knock before receiving a response. The door opens and CARTER appears in the aperture. He is now a little more fuddled, a little thicker of speech.*)

CARTER (*irritably*). Well? What is it? Has that letter come?

(*He does not at first perceive MISS RAEBURN, who is in the further portion of the room, near the window.*)

LASSEN. Now. But there's a Miss Raeburn 'ere wot wants to see you.

CARTER (*incredulously*). Here? (*Coming forward*

into the room and perceiving his visitor.) Good heavens!

MISS RAEburn (*coolly, coming towards him, holding out her hand with a smile*). How do you do, Mr. Wynne. Are you very shocked to see me here? I feel quite improper.

CARTER (*taking her hand mechanically, visibly embarrassed, but striving to emulate her matter-of-fact tone*). Shocked! Charmed, I assure you.

MISS RAEburn. Really? I wonder— May I go in there? (*Indicating the adjoining room.*) Or perhaps I might have a word with you here—

CARTER. Yes. Of course. Just a moment: (*Crossing to LASSEN, who has been an attentive spectator of their meeting.*) Have you been able to get those things for me yet?

LASSEN. The collars? Now. I was just gowin' for 'em w'en this laidy came in. I'll gow an' fetch 'em now, shall I?

CARTER. Oh, thank you. Sixteen by two and a quarter.

LASSEN (*unlocking the door, and quietly inserting the key on the other side*). Sixteen by two and a quarter.

CARTER (*to MISS RAEburn*). Won't you sit down? (*As he gets her a chair he perceives that LASSEN has picked up the two pairs of boots and is carrying them out of the room. Going towards him hastily.*) You might leave those boots of mine.

LASSEN (*halfway through the door*). Shan't be a moment.

CARTER. But I tell you I want them.

LASSEN. Shan't be a moment.

(*He disappears, CARTER, with a rueful expression on his face, turns away from the door and comes back towards MISS RAEburn.*)

CARTER. You must forgive the deficiencies of my toilette. Ah—he's taken my boots.

MISS RAEBURN. So I see. (*There is a pause.*) Don't fidget about—Sit down—I don't mind. I wear stockings myself, you know. You got my letter?

CARTER. No. Did you write to me, then, as well? (*Seating himself.*)

MISS RAEBURN. Yes. This morning. When I got your letter, I sat down on the spot and wrote to you to tell you that I never wanted to see your face again. As soon as I had posted it I got sorry—and in the end—well, in the end—I am here. Don't read that letter when it comes. Tear it up.

CARTER. Very well. (*A pause.*)

MISS RAEBURN (*who has been observing him as he sits dejectedly, staring at the floor*). You've been drinking. Haven't you?

CARTER. No.

MISS RAEBURN. Oh, yes, you have. (*Another pause, during which she continues to regard him sorrowfully.*) You wretched, wretched boy! (*She rises and goes closer to him.*) What on earth—what on earth has happened to you?

CARTER (*turning away from her impatiently*). Oh, don't preach to me. If that's all you've come here for—

MISS RAEBURN. I haven't the least intention of preaching, I assure you. I came here because you said you wanted to see me before you left the country—Though I can no more understand why you should want to see me, than I can understand why you should have got yourself into this awful trouble.

CARTER. Oh—well—I've done it—I've done for myself.

MISS RAEBURN. Poor thing! It's quite sorry for itself, I do believe.

CARTER (*bitterly*). It's all your fault. You know that. You know that as well as I do.

MISS RAEBURN. Oh, don't be absurd.

CARTER. It is. If you'd given me a chance two

years ago—if you hadn't thrown me over—just because of that woman—I shouldn't be here now.

MISS RAEBURN. Well, Cecil, all I can say is this. I don't want to seem hard or cruel—but there isn't a night that I don't thank God on my knees that I did throw you over. I suffered then—I can laugh now, and you would laugh—at the agony of grief I worked myself up to—because I really did love you then—better than I shall ever love any one in this world again—I know that. But—that's all done with—I know the real you, you see, now. And so, I say, I thank God every night that I had the sense, the courage—to refuse to marry you. That's my view.

CARTER (*endeavouring to be pathetic*). You mean that, Helen?

MISS RAEBURN. Yes—in spite of the pathetic expression in your eyes, I mean that. You never loved me—really—even then. If you had, you would never have entangled yourself with that unspeakable woman. I'm not a saint or a prude, Heaven knows. I have three brothers—and I know what boys are. But—you were engaged to me. I was to have been in a few weeks—your wife. And yet—you went to her—

CARTER (*with a shrug*). It was your own fault. If you hadn't insisted on posing as an iceberg—

MISS RAEBURN (*sharply*). Now, please! What's the use of going back to it? And even if there were the least excuse for Carrie, or Millie, or whatever her name was, nothing under heaven can account for this last mad folly. You know that. Were you in debt?

CARTER (*wearily*). Oh, yes. Up to the neck.

MISS RAEBURN. What? Horses? (*She pauses. He makes no reply.*) Or more Carries and Millies? (*He makes no reply. Changing her tone.*) Well—(*She makes a little gesture of finality.*) Have you been here all the time?

CARTER. No. I've been chivying all over London

—Poplar, Greenwich, Putney, Highgate—all over the place. I only came here last night.

MISS RAEBURN. Do you know anything about these men?

CARTER (*quickly*). Men?

MISS RAEBURN. There was a second man in the room when I came.

CARTER. Oh. Oh, yes. I remember now. My host—the gentleman who was here just now—had a visitor. No, I know nothing whatever about either of them. Except that they're probably both bad characters—like myself.

MISS RAEBURN. Why did you tell that man—the one who was here—why did you tell him that your name was Carter?

CARTER (*in consternation*). But—I didn't tell him.

MISS RAEBURN (*with raised eyebrows*). He knows.

(*A pause.*)

CARTER. Are you sure?

MISS RAEBURN. Oh, yes. Quite. He asked me if I were Mrs. Cecil Henry Carter—and even when I refused to admit the soft impeachment—he still insisted that it was Mr. Carter for whom I was really looking—not Mr. Wynne.

CARTER. Good Lord! How—how the devil did he find that out? (*He is visibly intensely dismayed. He bites his finger nails nervously.*)

MISS RAEBURN. Are you certain that you didn't—Were you drunk last night when you met him?

CARTER. No. No—

(*There is a pause.*)

MISS RAEBURN. Cecil.

CARTER (*who has begun to walk uneasily about the room*). Yes?

MISS RAEBURN. Where is—where is that money?

CARTER (*after a pause*). In there. In my bag.

MISS RAEBURN. How much is it—over twelve hundred pounds, isn't it?

CARTER. Yes.

MISS RAEBURN. And you have it all here—with you—in there in that room?

CARTER. Yes.

(A pause.)

MISS RAEBURN *(bravely)*. Are you sure that that man does not know that? *(She asks the question with slow deliberation.)*

(CARTER, whose anxiety is growing visibly, stares at her dubiously.)

CARTER. I don't see how he could. He couldn't. *(As if for encouragement.)* What?

MISS RAEBURN. I'm not sure. I—I—I can't help thinking that he does. Is it. Is it—gold or notes?

CARTER. Notes.

MISS RAEBURN *(after a pause)*. You know there's a reward?

CARTER *(anxiously)*. Is there? No—I didn't know that.

MISS RAEBURN. There is. The police told Mr. Edward Wright that—that they thought it quite possible—with that large sum of money on you—that—well, that something very serious might happen to you. So he decided to offer a reward—a large one, I believe.

CARTER. My God—then. My God—that fellow may be gone to give information to the police now. I—*(After another vicious attack on his finger nails.)* I must get out of this—Hell! *(As the idea strikes him.)* That's why he took my boots. No matter. *(He disappears hastily into the adjoining room.)*

MISS RAEBURN *(rising)*. Where are you going?

CARTER *(from inside)*. Out of this.

(She waits outside until he reappears. He does so in

a moment or so, hat in hand; and carrying a small bag.)

MISS RAEBURN (*who is unable to control an impulse to laughter at his somewhat grotesque appearance*). Please forgive me. I know I shouldn't laugh. But you look so funny.

CARTER (*irritably*). Oh, funny.

(*He moves quickly towards the door. She puts herself as quickly in his path.*)

MISS RAEBURN. No—no—Cecil—(*as he pushes her off, suspiciously and angrily*)—no, you mustn't go. I have something to say to you. Wait—just wait a moment.

CARTER (*impatiently*). What is it?

MISS RAEBURN. Don't do anything foolish. Don't lose your head. Just think. You know you can't go out into the street like that without attracting everybody's attention—even in this neighbourhood. If you had shabby clothes. Besides (*seeing that her words have produced an impression and speaking now more slowly and deliberately*) what's the use of running from one hiding-place to another? You know it's only a question of time—days. The police will find you in the end—and then—(*She shrugs her shoulders. Earnestly.*) Look! Putting it on that lowest ground—I beg of you, I entreat of you—give me that money—let me—

CARTER. Give it to you?

MISS RAEBURN. Yes. Give it to me. Let me return it to Mr. Wright.

CARTER (*impatiently, turning towards the door, but none the less plainly indecisive*). Oh, nonsense, my dear child.

MISS RAEBURN (*again intercepting him*). No, do listen. I saw Mr. Wright to-day, myself. I went to his office. He—if the money is returned to him before to-morrow, he has promised me that the firm will take no further action.

CARTER (*after a pause*). On your honour—have you given me away to Wright? Have you told him that I'm here?

MISS RAEBURN. On my honour, no.

(*A pause.*)

Mr. Wright even said that if you gave up the money and were willing to make a fresh start somewhere—out of England—he would help you. I know father would help you, too.

(CARTER *has now returned to the table and is fidgeting idly with the newspaper left upon it by LASSEN, his eyes downcast, his indecision increasing.*)

MISS RAEBURN (*approaching the table*). Cecil, old boy, do this. Be an honourable, honest man again. You're not too old to face the world again. Face it with your head up.

CARTER. Oh, it's all jolly well to talk like that.

(*As he speaks, mechanically, he turns over a page of the newspaper. As his eyes fall upon the photograph of himself, and the letterpress beneath it, his face assumes an expression of absolute consternation and dismay.*)

Oh! (*A pause.*) Oh, damn it!

MISS RAEBURN. What?

CARTER (*viciously*). Damn it. Here's the explanation. These fellows have seen this.

MISS RAEBURN. A photograph?

CARTER. Yes.

MISS RAEBURN. What is it? The *Daily Illustrated*? (*As she speaks, she approaches the table and stands beside him looking at the newspaper. Quietly.*) I thought so. They know all about you.

CARTER. I'll swear. (*He goes hastily towards the door leading to the staircase.*)

MISS RAEBURN. Oh, you may be sure they've locked that door.

(CARTER reaches the door, tries it and discovers that her surmise is correct. He shakes the door furiously, then goes hastily to the window, looks out, then turns away from it with a gesture of desperation. An idea occurring to him, he goes to the table and begins to search through the newspaper hastily.)

CARTER. There's nothing about a reward in this.

MISS RAEBURN. No. Not in that. (*Quickly.*) That newspaper is several days old, isn't it?

CARTER. Eh? Yes. Monday.

MISS RAEBURN. And this is Friday. It's four days old. Yes. And they were looking at it, too, when I came into the room—I think. At least, they were both sitting there at that table—and that newspaper was lying on it between them. That settles it. They know all about you.

(CARTER begins to walk restlessly about the room.

MISS RAEBURN, whose face has assumed an expression of the utmost gravity, almost of apprehension, seats herself, watching him abstractedly.)

CARTER (*after some moments, abruptly*). Do you think Wright really meant what he said to you?

MISS RAEBURN. I shall tell you exactly what he did say. "We close at one on Saturdays, Miss Raeburn. But if that money is returned either to me or to my brother' here before six o'clock to-morrow evening, we won't prosecute." Those were his very words.

CARTER. Well—(*He pauses. Then, after a moment, making up his mind.*) Well, look here, Helen—I'll give it to you.

MISS RAEBURN. That's a dear fellow.

(CARTER unlocks the bag, and taking from it a bundle of notes, hands them to her silently.)

MISS RAEBURN (*taking them from him, laying her other hand on his sleeve and looking up at his face*). Is it all here?

CARTER. All except four pounds. I had to spend some of it. I had no other money.

MISS RAEBURN. Give me whatever you have left of the four pounds.

CARTER. But—what shall I do. I——

MISS RAEBURN. I have some silver—I will lend that to you. To-morrow you must go and see father and Mr. Wright.

(He empties his pockets of sundry coins, which he hands to her. She takes out her own purse and hands it to him.)

MISS RAEBURN. That will do until to-morrow, I hope.

CARTER *(after a moment)*. I can't thank you.

MISS RAEBURN *(abstractedly)*. What? Oh—thank me!

(As she rolls the coins which he has given her in the notes, she perceives at the top of the bundle a ticket.)

MISS RAEBURN. There is a ticket with these.

CARTER. A ticket? Oh, yes. That is the ticket for a bag I left at Charing Cross—at the Left Luggage Office. You might give me that *(approaching her. As she hands him the ticket.)* Thanks. *(As he puts it away.)* You will see Wright to-morrow?

MISS RAEBURN. I trust so.

(Something in her tone attracts CARTER'S attention and his eyes follow her as she rises, and crossing to the window, peers out into the darkness, craning her neck to examine the walls of the house on either side of the window.)

(Coming away from the window, she approaches the door.)

MISS RAEBURN. You couldn't do anything with this door, could you? *(Shaking it.)* No. What does the window of that room look on to?

CARTER. The same yard as that one. Why?

MISS RAEBURN (*hesitating a moment before she puts her thoughts into words*). You know. I don't believe for a moment that those men have gone to the police—or would ever think of going to the police—even if they knew there were a reward.

CARTER Well, it doesn't matter, does it, now? Even if they arrest me—if Wright refuses to prosecute—I shall be released.

MISS RAEBURN. My dear boy, doesn't it occur to you at all that the behaviour of these men may mean something very much more serious than even your arrest.

CARTER (*vaguely alarmed by her air*). Oh, no—I shouldn't think so. Oh no.

MISS RAEBURN. You haven't seen the second man. If you had—He's got the most brutal, evil face I've ever seen on any human being. I'm not a coward, Cecil—but, I tell you—honestly—(*with a gesture*) I'm frightened. These men know or believe that you have twelve hundred pounds here—with you—at their mercy.

CARTER (*staring at her; in an undertone*). But they'd never leave us to ourselves like this if they meant mischief.

MISS RAEBURN (*shrugging her shoulders*). I shrewdly suspect that they've gone now to try to discover whether I came alone or with some one else. Before they admitted to me that you were here, they asked me to leave the room—like a fool I did—and then they talked together for quite a long time—and the second one—the big one—went away almost immediately. I'm sure they arranged something then. I know they did.

(*A pause.*)

CARTER (*nervously incoherent*). Do you mean to say—— (*He coughs to recover control of his voice.*) Do you mean that you think they'd actually——

MISS RAEBURN (*interrupting him*). I think that if

they find us both in this room when they come back—neither of us will leave it alive. I may be quite wrong—we shall know in a very few minutes, I expect. But—that's what I think.

(She seats herself again. CARTER, after a moment, goes again to the window, and in his turn examines the walls of the house on either side.)

CARTER *(coming away from the window)*. It's a sheer drop of thirty feet to the yard.

MISS RAEBURN. There's a pipe of some kind at the side—just near the window.

CARTER. Yes. But that would never bear my weight.

MISS RAEBURN. Try it.

CARTER. Oh, it wouldn't. I know it wouldn't.

(He walks about the room, his fright increasing momentarily. MISS RAEBURN hardly heeding him, sits trying to evolve some way out of the predicament.)

CARTER *(after a moment)*. Damn it all, Helen, you've scared me, with your own fright. I'm in a blue funk.

MISS RAEBURN *(doggedly)*. Try the pipe.

(CARTER goes to the window, and after some cautious investigation, climbs towards the right, supporting himself against the angle of the wall. He is just visible in the outer darkness. After some moments, he climbs back again.)

MISS RAEBURN *(grimly)*. Well?

CARTER *(very dubiously)*. It might hold for a few seconds. It would probably give before I got quarter way down, though.

MISS RAEBURN *(rising: with decision)*. Well—If you won't go, I must, that's all. One of us has got to risk it, that's plain. There is no other way.

CARTER. Oh, it's out of the question your going.
(A pause.) I haven't the faintest notion how I should

find my way to the street even if I did get down safely. And God knows what these beggars would do to you—probably—

MISS RAEBURN. Oh, don't bother about me. I can look after myself until you can get assistance. Don't think. Don't talk. Do it. If I hadn't these dash skirts. I'd do it like a shot.

(A pause.)

CARTER. All right, then. I'll chance it.

MISS RAEBURN. Don't go hunting for a policeman. Any one—any man will do. Don't waste time. I may be able to hold them off for ten minutes or so—but after that they're certain to discover that you've got away—and then—

CARTER. I shall do my best. If possible, I should prefer to keep clear of the police until you've seen Wright.

MISS RAEBURN. Yes. It's safer. *(Glancing at her watch.)* I may see Mr. Wright this evening. *(Holding out her hand to him.)* I will see Mr. Wright this evening. *(Turning away from him.)* Whistle twice if you get down safely.

CARTER. All right. *(He turns away, and seeing his hat and bag on the table, hesitates beside them.)*

MISS RAEBURN. No. Better leave your hat and your bag—and—that ticket. The Parcels' Office ticket for your other bag. Give me that—I may want that.

(He hands her the ticket, then nods to her, and going to the window climbs out on the sill, leans over to the right, moves one foot out to the pipe, then abruptly disappears. After some moments, MISS RAEBURN rises and goes to the window. As she reaches it, the sound of footsteps ascending the stairs attracts her attention: she glances towards the door, then hastily takes CARTER'S bag from the table and moves quickly to the door leading into the adjoining room.)

MISS RAEBURN (*loudly, as if speaking to CARTER in the other room*). No, not yet. I hear some one on the stairs, now. Perhaps that is he.

(*Reaching the door of the other room, she opens it, throws into the room CARTER'S bag, then stands holding the door slightly ajar and apparently speaking to CARTER; the door leading from the stairs opens, and LASSEN—now booted—enters the room.*)

MISS RAEBURN (*as LASSEN enters*). What? A glass? (*She glances towards the cracked mirror hanging on the wall*. Yes, there is one here. I'll ask. (*To LASSEN.*) May I borrow your looking-glass for a few minutes?

LASSEN (*who has locked the door leading to the stairs*). Borrow it? Wot for?

MISS RAEBURN. Mr. Carter wants to shave.

(*As she speaks, she detaches the glass from the wall. A faint whistle is heard through the window, and is repeated after a moment.*)

LASSEN (*after a reflective pause*). Cw. 'As 'e got a razor?

MISS RAEBURN (*with a steady look at him*). Yes, thank you. You don't mind his having this?

LASSEN. Mind? Now.

MISS RAEBURN. Thank you very much.

(*She goes to the door of the adjoining room. As she passes through it.*)

MISS RAEBURN. Here you are.

(*She disappears for a moment, reappearing almost instantly. As she comes out, shutting the door behind her—over her shoulder.*)

Don't be long, please.

(As she says these words, her eyes turn to LASSEN.
She goes towards him slowly.)

LASSEN. Wot does 'e want to shave 'isself for? Funny time o' day to shave 'isself.

MISS RAEBURN. I will tell you why. (*She looks at him for a moment. Very quietly.*) I know I may trust you, may I not?

LASSEN (*puzzled*). Trust me? Course. Course you may trust me.

MISS RAEBURN. Yes. There's something about your face, something that assures one that you would never do anything treacherous or unfair. One feels—one knows somehow that one can depend upon you—absolutely.

LASSEN (*still more puzzled, after a stare at her*). Are you—are you kiddin'?

MISS RAEBURN (*who has apparently never heard the word and is incapable of the action*). Kidding? Kidding? What is that?

LASSEN. Are you tryin' to pull my leg?

MISS RAEBURN. I am in earnest—if that is what you mean. I don't trust your friend though.

LASSEN. Jack? Ow, Jack's all right.

MISS RAEBURN. No—I do trust you; but—he—well—he's different, isn't he?

LASSEN. Ow—well—we're not exactly the same clawss, that's right.

MISS RAEBURN (*meditatively*). No—he's a brute. You—you're one of Nature's gentlemen, I think.

LASSEN (*not entirely unconvinced of the justice of this criticism*). Well—p'raps.

MISS RAEBURN. Look. (*With an appearance of intimate and confidential reliance*). What I am going to say to you—you must promise me that you will not repeat it—to any one—either your friend Jack or any one. Will you promise me that?

LASSEN (*with a grin*). Lor lumme, yes. I'll promise you anything—when you arks it like that.

MISS RAEBURN. On your word?

LASSEN. On my word. Gow a'ead an' let's 'ear wot it is.

MISS RAEBURN. It's this. (*She is now standing near the candles—she examines her watch abstractedly—then glances at his face for a moment before proceeding. Hesitatingly.*) I hope you won't be shocked—but—mind—you've promised me solemnly that this will not go beyond yourself.

LASSEN. I've promised. An' you needn't be afraid o' shockin' me. I've a 'ardened constitootion. Gow a'ead.

MISS RAEBURN. Well. Mr. Carter—(*breaking off abruptly again.*) By the way, how did you discover Mr. Carter's real name?

LASSEN. 'Ow? See 'is picture in the paiper with 'is naime underneath it. That's 'ow.

MISS RAEBURN. This paper? (*Indicating the newspaper lying on the table.*)

LASSEN. Yus.

MISS RAEBURN. Oh—then—then you know that—that he is in trouble? You know what has happened?

LASSEN (*seating himself and looking up at her.*) 'Spowse I does? Wot then?

MISS RAEBURN (*turning away from him.*) We guessed you knew. (*Turning to him appealingly.*) You won't betray him? You won't give him up. I know that that is the right—the strictly just thing to do—the thing that a man like you—a man with high principles and a rigid sense of honour—would almost certainly feel it is his duty to do. But—(*laying her hand on his sleeve.*)—you won't, will you?

LASSEN. 'E's a thief. That's wot 'e is—a common thief.

MISS RAEBURN (*availing herself of the fact that he has averted his eyes for a moment, to look again at her watch.*) I know. But—if I tell you that you will really be helping Mr. Carter to restore the money

which he——(*She breaks off abruptly.*) I can't think. Do you know, even now, I can't believe that he did it. That he could have been so incredibly mad as to take that money. I can't believe it.

(*A pause.*)

LASSEN. Well—gow a'ead. I ain't 'eard anythin' wot I didn't know afore, so far.

MISS RAEBURN. What was I saying? Oh, yes. If I tell you that you will really be helping to restore that money to its proper owners—won't you—won't your conscience allow you to do what I ask of you—to spare him the punishment—punishment which, I know, perhaps, he deserves; but still—because I know that he must have been mad to do it—he never meant to do it—I mean, he would never, never have done such a thing if he had been in his right senses. I know him, you see. I know him so well—and I know——

LASSEN (*impatently*). Yes, yes—all right—but—wot 'ave you got to tell me? That's wot I'm waitin' to 'ear. Is 'e (*with a jerk of his head towards the door of the other room.*) thinkin' of givin' up the stuff 'e collared, then?

MISS RAEBURN. Yes. He will. He has consented to do that. That is why I came to him—here—to ask him to give back the money to Mr. Wright. He's willing to do that—and after all, that—that is some sort of an atonement, isn't it?

LASSEN. Some sort of a wot?

MISS RAEBURN. An atonement—a making up for what he has done. And that is how we want you to help us. Because in helping Mr. Carter, you will be helping me—and I know you'd like to help me, wouldn't you?

LASSEN (*gazing at her charming face*). W'y? 'cause you've a pretty faice, is it?

MISS RAEBURN (*demurely*). Oh no. My face is not pretty—and besides, I know that you are not

the kind of weak, foolish man that would allow a pretty face to induce him to disregard the dictates of his conscience. No—no—but—however—if you are willing to help him—this is what I want to ask you to do. You see, of course, Mr. Carter naturally wouldn't care to go to Mr. Wright—himself—you understand—with the money—and I—well—I couldn't very well go to him, either—could I—? I mean—well—frankly—I shouldn't care—you know?

LASSEN. Well?

MISS RAEBURN. Well—we want some other person—some trustworthy person to go. You—if you are willing to do us the great kindness—will you?

LASSEN (*after a moment*). Me? (*He stares at her.*)

MISS RAEBURN. I would go with you to Charing Cross. Not that I distrust you. Don't think for a moment that I distrust you; but I shan't have any peace until I know that the money is safely in Mr. Wright's hands. We—you and I, would go to Charing Cross Station—get the bag at the Left Luggage Office—go from there straight to Mr. Wright's Office. Give Mr. Wright the bag; he can open it. Mr. Carter has lost the key.

LASSEN (*who has risen, visibly disconcerted*). Ain't he got the stuff with 'im, then?

MISS RAEBURN. The money? Here? No.

LASSEN (*dismayed*). Ow.

MISS RAEBURN. Oh, it would be much too risky carrying a lot of money like that about him. He has been hiding for nearly a week, you see—and—well—of course—in tenement houses and places of that sort—well—frankly—one comes across curious people in places of that kind—doesn't one?

LASSEN (*sullenly*). Down't know, I'm sure.

MISS RAEBURN. Oh, yes. I assure you—quite curious people. (*His back being turned, she again glances at her watch.*) Of course, if—well—if you went to the police—the money would be returned to

Mr. Wright, in that case, too. But—I beg of you not to do that.

LASSEN (*after a thoughtful pause, giving a searching look at her face*). 'E's got the money in 'is bag in the Left Luggage Office at Charing Cross Station, you say?

MISS RAEBURN (*taking the ticket which CARTER had given her from her glove, and examining it by the candle*). "Left Luggage Office. Charing Cross Station." Mr. Wright leaves his office at six o'clock. If possible, we ought to get there before he leaves.

(*She rises, goes slowly to the door leading to the adjoining room, opens it, glances in, then utters an exclamation of amused confusion and retreats hastily.*)

MISS RAEBURN (*laughingly*). Oh, gracious! (*Coming back towards LASSEN.*) I forgot that Mr. Carter was engaged in such a serious operation. I do hope I haven't make him cut himself. (*Serious again.*) I'm afraid I can't wait much longer. Will you do what I ask you?

LASSEN. I'm not satisfied abaht this. Lemme 'ave a look at that ticket. I'm not satisfied abaht this. (*He holds out a grimy paw.*)

(*MISS RAEBURN hands him the ticket. He examines it closely, then turns to her again.*)

LASSEN (*slowly*). I tells you wot—I'll gow to Charin' Crawss and get the bag an' fetch it back 'ere—see? If that money's in it—w'y—then you or me'll gow an' intervoo this 'ere Mr. Wright. If it ain't—w'y—well, then, I'll see wot I thinks I'll do abaht it. There—that's wot I'm willin' to do.

MISS RAEBURN. You mean—that—you—that you would wish Mr. Carter to remain here—until you return?

LASSEN. Yes. That's wot I mean—'im and you stay 'ere till I comes back.

MISS RAEBURN. Oh! but why —— ?

(They both turn towards the door, as the sound of approaching footsteps reaches them.)

(There is a knock at the door leading from the stairs.)

LASSEN. 'Oo's that ?

(MISS RAEBURN'S expression of momentary hope fades as the reply reaches her ears.)

RUTT *(outside)*. Me, Jack.

LASSEN. Right oh! Arf a mo. *(In an undertone to MISS RAEBURN, hastily.)* Best keep a tight mouth afore Jack, you know—if you don't want your friend quodded. If 'e finds aht w'y Carter's 'idin' 'ere—w'y, 'e'll gow strite to the police station. That's the kind 'e is. 'E cawn't bear sneaks, Jack cawn't. You keep your mouth shut. I 'vise you.

(He goes and unlocks the door. RUTT comes in.)

RUTT *(after a quick glance about, to LASSEN)*. Nothing.

LASSEN. Same 'ere.

RUTT. Were's the bloke ?

LASSEN. In there. Shavin' 'isself. *(He winks, with a grin.)*

(Turning away from RUTT, and approaching MISS RAEBURN, who has listened to this colloquy anxiously but discreetly.)

MISS RAEBURN. Well—is that right? I can trust you ?

LASSEN. Down't you know as 'ow you can? Ain't yer said yourself as 'ow I'm an honourable gentleman of 'igh principles? Plain for any one to see? Course you can trust me.

MISS RAEBURN *(quietly)*. Very well.

(LASSEN *nods*, then goes over to RUTT, who has looked on distrustfully.)

LASSEN. You keep an eye 'ere for a few minutes, Jack. (*With a wink.*) I'm gowin' to fetch something for this 'ere laidy.

RUTT. Wot?

LASSEN. You'll see. (*With a significant look.*) Lock the door. I shawn't be long. Be careful—d'y 'ear?

RUTT. Ow, all right. 'Urry up.

(LASSEN *nods and goes out*. RUTT *locks the door*, then comes forward to the table and seats himself grimly, his face averted from MISS RAE BURN. There is silence for several moments. MISS RAE BURN'S eyes rest meditatively on RUTT'S face.)

MISS RAE BURN (*coming towards RUTT*). Will you please open that door for me?

RUTT (*turning on her with a vicious snarl*). Now.

MISS RAE BURN. But I want to follow that man. I must. I don't trust him. I know that he doesn't really mean to come back here. Please open the door for me. Please.

RUTT (*ferociously*). Now—you——

(*He rises*, MISS RAE BURN *retreats before his sinister advance.*)

RUTT (*hidecously*). Down't you 'ave no fear. 'E'll come back.

MISS RAE BURN. No, no, no. He won't. He's got the ticket.

(RUTT'S attention is at once attracted.)

He'll go to Charing Cross and get Mr. Carter's bag—and—oh—do let me go. Do, I beg of you.

RUTT (*somewhat uneasily, meaningly*). Wot bag are you talkin' abaht? Wot bag, I says?

MISS RAE BURN (*who is now almost tearful*). Mr.

Carter's bag—I asked that man to help me to return the money. You know—*do you know?*

RUTT (*with greatly increased uneasiness and ferocity*). Money—Wot the 'ell—'As 'e (*jerking his head towards the stairs*) got the money?

MISS RAEBURN. Not yet—but he's gone to Charing Cross—and he has the ticket for the bag—and—oh, please don't keep me—please let me go.

RUTT. Shut your row, will you? (*He raises his hand menacingly*.) Charing Cross? Charing Cross Station?

MISS RAEBURN. Yes. It's in the Left Luggage Office there. Oh—what shall I do?

RUTT (*viciously*). The blawsted little—

(*He snatches up his hat and rushes towards the door. He stops for a moment to listen, as footsteps are once again audible ascending the stairs.*)

MISS RAEBURN. Perhaps I am wrong. Perhaps this is he.

(*RUTT opens the door hastily, and CARTER appears in the aperture, one hand bound up in a handkerchief, but otherwise unscathed.*)

MISS RAEBURN (*at once hastening towards the door. Piteously*). Oh, what shall I do—what shall I do?

RUTT (*ferociously*). Shut it, curse you. (*To CARTER.*) What does you want?

CARTER. I want—

MISS RAEBURN (*interrupting hastily*). The gentleman is a friend of mine. He has been waiting for me. (*To CARTER.*) Do come in—I am in the most awful trouble—I don't know what on earth—

RUTT (*after a quick glance from one to the other, pushing CARTER violently to one side, and rushing hastily from the room*). Aht o' the way, you—

(*He disappears tumultuously.*)

(*CARTER gazes after him in stupefaction.* MISS RAEBURN

BURN'S *expression of tearful anxiety changes abruptly to laughter. She seats herself and laughs uncontrolled. CARTER stares at her, quite puzzled.*)

CARTER. What on earth? —

MISS RAEBURN (*jumping up*). I'll tell you as we go along. Oh, it's too funny. But how foolish of you to return alone.

CARTER. I saw the other—the small one run out of the house and away down the street. So I reckoned I might risk coming alone. How did you manage?

MISS RAEBURN. Oh, it's a long story. And I've had to tell some most deplorable whoppers. I told them that you were shaving. Though I don't know that that was a whopper, after all.

(*As she goes towards the door. CARTER collects his hat and bag.*)

On the whole, I rather fancy we've both had a pretty close shave. Come along.

CURTAIN FALLS.



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